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ABSTRACT

A study sought to determine whether female innovative teens have mass media behavior similar to that of adult innovators. Research indicates that adult innovators (adult who are the first to adopt new ideas and products and who comprise 16% of the population) are more venturesome, better educated, more socially integrated, and have greater contact with the mass media. This research, however, concentrates on adults; this study is aimed at determining if the generalization holds for teenagers. One hundred and ninety-three female teenage college students were classified into two groups--innovators and non-innovators--on the basis of the number of new fashion product adopted in the course of a year; data were then collected on the number of newspapers and magazines read regularly. Analysis of the data by means of a Chi Square test showed that the innovative group had substantially more contact with the mass media. Thus, implications are that both adult and teenage innovators display similar behavior in contrast to that of their non-innovative peers. (PB)

MASS MEDIA EXPOSURE AS A DIMENSION OF THE TEEN-AGE INNOVATOR

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Abstract

Of major concern to social scientists has been the concept of innovativeness, which proposes that some individuals exert a disproportionate amount of influence on the behavior of others in some given topic area. Studies indicate that over one thousand investigations in more than five disciplines have been conducted in this area.

However, few studies have concentrated on the teen innovator, but rather have concentrated on the adult innovator.

The question which prompted this study was, Do female innovative teens have mass media behavior similar to adult innovators? The subsequent investigation suggested that, indeed, both adult and teenage innovators display similar behavior in contrast to their non-innovative peers.

INTRODUCTION

Of major concern to social psychologists has been the concept of opinion leadership, which proposes that some individuals exert a disproportionate amount of influence on the behavior of others in some given topic area. Rogers reports that over one thousand (1,243) studies in more than five disciplines have investigated this leadership dimension to one extent or another, the studies centering on diffusion of innovations and opinion leadership.[1] In all of these studies, however, the opinion leadership among teenagers has been virtually ignored.

Nevertheless, a necessary component for the systematic development of knowledge concerning the phenomena of opinion leadership needs to include this social category. This investigation centers on this need. Using sample respondents who were female-post-high-school teenagers enrolled lower-division summer school students at Brigham Young University and Utah Technical College at Provo, this study will report on media behavior in the innovator adopter category as it relates to media behavior.

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[1]Everett M. Rogers, Bibliography on the Diffusion of Innovations, Research Report No. 63 (July, 1967), Michigan State University.

The classic study which popularized the opinion leadership concept--and which gave birth to later studies in the adoption-diffusion process--was the Katz and Lazarsfeld study of 1945-46.[2] In this study, 800 women in Decatur, Illinois, were interviewed in an attempt to trace the flow of influence for movies, fashion, public affairs, and marketing (food shopping). The results indicated that opinion leaders were found in almost equal number at high, middle, and low socio-economic groupings. Further, the opinion leader for one category was not necessarily an opinion leader for another.

The groundwork for present studies on the diffusion process comes from the work of Everett M. Rogers, presented in his book, Diffusion of Innovations.[3] Rogers classifies the adult members of society into five groups according to the amount of time elapsing from the time a product in introduced until it is-adopted by the individual. Rogers also highlighted the fact that most diffusion curves approach a normal distribution.

Members of the first group which adopt a new product are called innovators, and according to Rogers, compromise approximately 2.5 percent of the population.[4] These are

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[2]Eligu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1955).

[3]Rogers, Diffusion, p. 76.

[4]Ibid.

frequently cosmopolites, having professional, business and social contact outside of their own immediate social circle.

Members of the second group are referred to as influentials and are considered to be the opinion leaders. They comprise about 14 percent of the population. Their social relationships are confined primarily to local groups.[5]

Rogers indicates that members of the early majority group, comprising about 34 percent of the population, are the most deliberate of the adopter groups. They do not usually consider adopting a new product until a considerable number of their peers have adopted the item.[6]

The fourth group is thought to be comprised primarily of those below average in terms of income and social prestige and are referred to as late majority. They are also found to be older than members of the previously mentioned groups.[7] Again, they make up about 34 percent of the population.

Members of the last group, known as laggards, constitute the final 16 percent to adopt. They have the lowest income, and belong to the lowest social status.[8] It is not uncommon

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[5]Reuben Cohen, "A Theoretical Model for Consumer Market Prediction," Sociological Inquiry, Vol. 32 (Winter, 1962), pp. 43-50.

[6]Rogers, Diffusion, p. 314.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Ibid.

that by the time of adoption by members of this group other innovations are already being adopted by the other adopter groups.

From studies centering on the diffusion of innovation process certain social characteristics of the various adopter categories have emerged.

Four areas of diffusion will be noted here. The first concerns studies conducted by rural sociologists focusing on the adoption of new farm practices.[9] The second is on the adoption of new drugs by doctors.[10] The third is on the adoption of a new type telephone by housewives.[11] The fourth relates to women's clothing fashion.[12]

In this review, and for the remainder of the paper, the first two adopter categories--that is, innovators and influentials--will be combined and referred to as innovators. Put another way, the focus will be on the characteristics of the first 16 percent of the population to adopt a new innovation.

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[9]Thomas S. Robertson, "Social Factors in Innovative Behavior," in Kassarjian and Robertson (eds.), Perspectives in Consumer Behavior (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1968), pp. 361-370.

[10]James S. Coleman, Elihu Katz, and Herbert Menzel, Medical Innovation: A Diffusion Study (New York: Bobbs-Merril Co., 1966).

[11]Robertson, "Social Factors in Innovative Behavior," pp. 361-370.

[12]John W. Summers, "The Identity of Women's Clothing Fashion Opinion Leaders," Journal of Marketing, Vol. 7 (May, 1970), pp. 178-185.

Research findings generally indicate that farmers who are innovative have more education, read more farm magazines and extension bulletins, are more active in formal organization such as cooperatives, PTA's, and churches, and, at the same time, more different kinds of groups, and are more active in statewide and countrywide organizations than are farmers in the other adopter groups. The innovative farmer tends to be more cosmopolitan in his outlook, and much more mobile, often having personal contact with extension stations in states other than his own.

Similarly, the doctors who were among the first to adopt new ethical drugs were more likely to be a frequent visitor to out-of-town medical centers and meetings, reader of many professional journals, a person with a broad scope of attention to the medical world at large and yet one who participates closely in his own medical community.

The housewives who were among the first to adopt the new touch-tone (push-button) telephone were significantly higher on venturesomeness than the non-opinion leaders. They were more willing to take new product risks with other home-appliance innovations, and were more socially integrated within their neighborhoods.

Consistent with the research findings identifying characteristics of the innovative farmers, doctors, and housewives adopting the touch-tone telephone, innovators in women's clothing fashion were found to have a higher education,

were more gregarious, read more in women's fashion magazines, took a more active role on social organizations, and showed a greater degree of venturesomeness by being willing to risk experimentation with new clothing fashions recently introduced.

In summary, then, the innovator--when compared to the non-innovator--is concluded to be more venturesome (a willingness to take risks), more socially integrated (a high degree of participation with other members of the community), better educated, and has a much higher contact rate with all the mass media.

Eli Ginzberg states that "The kind of adults that an individual becomes reflects, among other factors, the many influences and experiences to which he was exposed from the day of his birth until he reaches an age when he becomes responsible for himself."[13] This being so, we can hypothesize that the social characteristics of the adult innovator will be present as well in the post-high-school te e innovator. In other words, teenage innovators, too, will be more socially venturesome, more socially integrated, and have a higher contact rate with all the mass media.

Our concern now centers on the third of these characteristics, that of media behavior.

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[13]Eli Ginzberg, Life Styles of Educated Women (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), p. 46.

Research Methodology

Since adopter categories are a matter of classification and evaluation, there is an almost unlimited variety of ways in which diffusion studies have been structured. One of the most widespread classifications used by social scientists and marketing researchers studying the diffusion of ideas and products includes the innovator, influential, early majority, late majority, and laggard categories. Undoubtedly, the widespread use of these categories is due to their usefulness in the research situation.

These five categories were also used in this study. They were collapsed into two major divisions--innovators, which included the innovator and influential categories, and non-innovators, which included the remaining categories.

Research Design

Of the many methods used to identify people in the individual adopter categories, two major techniques have emerged. One technique is to classify adopters based on the time of adoption from date of introduction of a new product to some specified period of time, and the second is to base a classification on the relative number of products adopted from a defined universe of available new products.

An example of a study utilizing the first technique is that of Loy, who placed respondents into one of the adopter

categories according to when they adopted a particular idea or product (see Table 1).[14]

The second widespread technique is described by Donnelly from his study on social character and the acceptance of new products:

> Five grocery products were used for the study. Each product was new at the time of the study and all were significantly different from anything previously available, so that they could be considered innovations. The five tested were: canned puddings, freeze-dried coffee, pre-soak rinses, canned cake frosting, and freeze-dried fruit cereal. Each respondent was asked to indicate which of the five products she had tried.[15]

This second method is particularly suited to dichotomous studies, such as the present one, in which respondents are grouped into innovator and non-innovator categories. Consequently, it was selected for use in this investigation.

To defined universe of new products, 50 female students at Brigham Young University were asked to rate all the women's clothing stores in Provo, Utah. The list was taken from the local telephone directory. The five stores which the poll ranked as most innovative were then visited and the manager asked to list fashion items that had been on the market for

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[14] John W. Loy, "Social Psychological Characteristics of Innovators," American Sociological Review, Vol. 34, No. 1 (February, 1969), p. 77; for another example of this technique, see Edgar A. Pessemier, "Be Identified?" Journal of Marketing Research, Vol. IV (November, 1967), pp. 349-354.

[15] James A. Donnelly, "Social Character and Acceptance of New Products," Journal of Marketing Research, (February, 1970), p. 112.

TABLE 1

Distribution of Adopter Categories

Year of Adoption	Number Adopting per Year	Adopter Category
1957	1	Innovators (n=3)
1958	2	
1959	11	Early Majority (n=24)
1960	13	
1961	3	Late Majority (n=15)
1962	3	
1963	3	
1964	6	
1965	0	Laggards (n=6)
1966	1	
Not Adopting	5	
Total	48	

a year or less. The ten most-named items are listed below. The rationale used here was the same as that used in previous studies: by definition, a new product is an innovative product. Again by definition, an item is new up to a certain specified time. This time span was determined to be one year.[16]

The new fashion items were: maxi coat, maxi dress, midi coat, midi dress, midi beach cover-up, clogs (Swedish), beach apron, hat-floppy (leather or fabric), safari jacket, and ski pants (over-the-boot). Out of the ten items selected, a respondent had to list two or more to be classified as an innovator. The reasoning here was that the listing of only one item could mean that the respondent had received it as a gift or had purchased as a result of peer-group pressure. The ownership of two or more of the innovative items was deemed to imply that ownership was by design rather than by chance.

Media exposure was measured by the number of newspapers and magazines read on a regular basis.

This was determined by asking the following question: "Please list the publications that you read regularly." Following this were two columns, one headed, "newspaper," and the other headed, "magazines." Since earlier studies

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[16]Bruce H. Bylund, "Social and Psychological Factors Associated with the Acceptance of New Foods Products," Bulletin 708, Pennsylvania State University, December 1963.

had centered on print media, and excluded the electronic media, the investigators felt--for comparative purposes--the necessity to do the same.

The data for this investigation was collected by distributing interview schedules to respondents in various classes at Brigham Young University and at Utah Technical College at Provo. Further schedules were distributed to respondents living in housing units in spacial proximity to the two schools.

Respondents were restricted to females between ages of 17-19. The data was collected over a period of 10 days from June 23 through July 2, 1970.

Method of Analyzing Data

The data were analyzed by use of a Chi Square test. The minimum confidence level acceptable for this study was 95%.

Results

Complete schedules were collected from 193 respondents. Of this number, 32 indicated they owned two or more of the clothing items which make up the defined universe of new products. These 32 people, then, were labeled innovators. Non-innovators totaled 161.

It was hypothesized that--like their adult counterpart--the post-high-school teenage fashion innovators would have greater media exposure than non-innovators. A test of this hypothesis yielded a X^2 significant at the .001 level. (See Table 2.)

TABLE 2

Media (Newspapers and Magazines) Exposure For Innovators and Non-innovators

	Number of newspapers and magazines read on regular basis			
Innovators (N=32)	2 or less	3	4-5	6 or more
	5 (15%)	8 (25%)	7 (22%)	12 (38%)
Non-innovators (N=161)	59 (37%)	32 (20%)	52 (32%)	18 (11%)

X^2 total = 16.7406
at 95% confidence level, X^2 = 7.81
at 99% confidence level, X^2 = 11.3
at 99.9% confidence level, X^2 = 16.3

Summary

The question which prompted this study was: "Do female innovative teens have media behavior similar to adult innovators?" A literature search indicated that no study had heretofore dealt with this question. The subsequent investigation suggested that, indeed, both adult and teenage innovators display similar behavior in contrast to their non-innovative peers.